SYNOPSIS OF THE PROPOSED PH.D THESIS ON

The Idea Of Women Emancipation In The Short Stories Of Rabindranath Tagore

Hasina Sikdar
Department of Philosophy
and Comparative Religion

GENDER AS A CATEGORY:

The concept of gender occupies a central position in the feminist philosophy. However, there is not just one feminist position regarding the notion of gender. Gender understanding differs according to differences in feminist position. Nevertheless, the dominant feminist view is that, while sex and sex differences are purely biological and natural, gender is a socio-cultural construct. Gender idea is based on a fundamentally social idea of distinction in the nature and behaviour of men and women based on sex differences. It is far more complex than sex differences. While biological differences do not imply any natural discrimination or hierarchical distribution of sex, the social construct of gender conditions our understanding of men and women in relativist and hierarchical manners.

The concept of gender also emphasizes the relational nature of masculinity and femininity. Femininity can only be by contrasting it with masculinity. 'Normal' or ‘appropriate' feminine behaviour can only be understood by contrasting it with what is not normal or not appropriate for her. This understanding depends on our culturally constructed notion of gender roles (of men and women). Notion of gender roles (of men and women) are gender- appropriate behaviour.

While ‘gender behaviour’ is concrete and overt and can be observed, ‘gender thought’ is subtler and covert. Nevertheless, their presence in the conceptual level cannot be denied as the source of gender behaviour, at the level of action, gender discrimination express itself as gender behaviour, at the institutional level it expresses itself as patriarchy, whereas, at the conceptual level it is expressed in androcentric thought structures.

GENDER EMPOWERMENT AND EMANCIPATION:

The interest of feminism in gender is solely associated with the feminist agenda of women's empowerment. Empowerment or attaining power and status may happen without disturbing the existing power structure or by a more radical process of disturbing the status quo in favour of a restructuring based on equality of genders. In both of its forms, the aim of empowerment is to attain a new emancipatory identity. But that is not possible without affecting and reshaping existing sense of identity of men.

The aim of feminism is to restructure the existing power equation of hierarchy implicit in patriarchy, in favour of a balance of power based on equal sharing and trust between sexes.

Emancipation, therefore, is not to be understood as an abstract religious notion of metaphysical relevance, it is rather a process of questing and breaking down of the existing social, political and economic restrictions in favour of a new empowerment leading to fellowship and equality of both sexes.

GENDER AND EMANCIPATION IN TAGOR'S STORIES:

In the above paragraphs I have tried to explain the concept of gender as essentially a social construct and as essentially in relation to character, thought and behaviour of people – both men and women – in a social setting. It is built upon the binary relationship between man-woman or more accurately between masculinity-femininity - two concepts that are opposite yet complementary. One cannot exist without the existence of the other.

In my work I aspire to explore the ideas of gender, gender roles and gender relations within the limited sphere of short stories written by Tagore. In Tagore's stories women have been portrayed in so many roles. Women have been portrayed as mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, widows, friends. They have been portrayed as dominating, strong, soft, passive, intelligent, protesting etc. and also as politically conscious or active characters. She has been portrayed in various relationships with men and other women. At the same time, men have been portrayed in their various roles and relationship. I will try to explore both men and women in their various shades of characters and situations.

But my work is not merely an analysis of gender and gender relations in Tagore's writings. It will be a study into the concept of emancipation and formation of emancipatory identities for both men and women as Tagore envisages it. Tagore's stories build up various characters,

situating them within a web of relationships and leading them into situations of crisis that finally break down their existing comfortable life-styles. This gives rise to restructuring of their understanding of self and creating a new web of relationship among themselves. I wish to follow these Characters up to their new identities of relative emancipation and see what emancipation means for each of these characters.

Moreover, by emancipation, I do not mean emancipation in any metaphysical sense. Rather I would try to explore the Change and restructuring of identities as played out in the micro and macro level of society including the economic and political fields and not just within families.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

How are women and femininity depicted in Tagore's short stories?

How does Tagore build up gender differences, gender relations, gender oppression and challenges in his stories?

What is meant by Emancipation in Tagore's stories?

How does Tagore Portray 'Emancipation' for women?

Is there any common theme present in his understanding of women's emancipation?

How does he envisage emancipation in the lives of his male characters?

Is emancipation for women and emancipation for men two different things?

How does women's emancipation influence men's identity in society?

These are some of the questions I will try to answer through my work.

METHODOLOGY:

For the purpose of this thesis I will use the methodology relevant for philosophical research. Emphasis will be given on understanding and analysing the concepts of 'gender' and 'emancipation' from the philosophical standpoint and especially from the standpoint of feminist philosophy. Along with this I will analyze the concept of 'gender' and the journey towards 'emancipation' as found in Tagore's short stories. Overall, my research work will be analytical in characters.

I will keep my work restricted mainly to the short stories written by Rabindranath Tagore. By short stories I mean the complete collection of stories in *Galpa-Guchha* written by Tagore.

Subjective interpretation of the research questions from the works of Rabindranath Tagore is the method to be applied for my work.

CHAPTERIZATION :

I propose to make the following chapter divisions for my thesis:

Chapter 1: **Introduction**

Chapter 2: **Concept of emancipation as a philosophical category**.

In this chapter I will discuss the relevance and meanings of this concept from the perspective of philosophy including feminist philosophy.

Chapter 3: **Women in Tagore's stories**.

In this chapter I wish to give some detailed analysis of various prominent female characters in different social situation and different gender roles from Tagore's short stories.

Chapter 4: **Emancipatory identities of Tagore's characters**.

In this chapter I wish to analyze the new identity formations of Tagore's women characters, and see how they subscribe to their sense of emancipation. Also, how their new identity affects the identity of other characters in the web, including the identities of male characters.

Chapter 5: **Conclusion**.

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